

HISTORICAL
DICTIONARY
OF TUNISIA

Second Edition

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Editor's Foreword

Although not particularly large, populous, or rich, Tunisia has long played a disproportionately significant role in international affairs. This is due in large part to its location and its unique function as a bridge between the Arab world, Africa, and Europe. As it steered its own fairly steady course through the many currents and countercurrents of political, economic, and social change in the years after its independence in 1956, Tunisia often served as a model of development for newly emergent African and Asian nations.

Tunisia's traditional function as a link between divergent cultures was enhanced by the impressive efforts of Habib Bourguiba, the country's president for three decades (1957–1987) and the guiding spirit of the struggle for independence before that. As an outspoken champion of development in the Arab and African worlds, Bourguiba attained a commanding presence abroad. Indeed, for many, Tunisia and Bourguiba seemed to be one. Ultimately, however, he also evolved into a domineering and inflexible leader at home. When a growing national sentiment for change unseated him, his successor, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, introduced significant changes that attempted to preserve Tunisia's progressive secular traditions while maintaining stability in the face of an internal opposition increasingly centered on Islamic political movements rather than, as in the past, on the left. Thus far, Ben Ali's balancing act has generally succeeded.

Consequently, Tunisia has avoided sinking into the chaos that has befallen some of its regional neighbors, most notably Algeria. On the contrary, the country has evolved into a privileged partner of Europe and the moderate Arab and African countries. As a result, despite its limitations of size and natural resources, Tunisia continues to play a significant international role. This revised edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Tunisia* will enrich outsiders' understanding of this crucial country by elucidating the historical context in which its leaders and people are rooted. The chronology has been updated, entries have been added or expanded, and the enlarged bibliography provides access to many new and relevant works. As before, the information is cogent and the style eminently readable.

This second edition was written by the author of the first, Kenneth J. Perkins. Professor Perkins is a specialist on modern North Africa, with an abiding interest in Tunisia. He has visited the region regularly since

The Zirids' flight to Mahdiyya instilled in the amirs a new interest in the Mediterranean basin, which they demonstrated by initiating maritime raids on the commerce of the emerging Italian city-states and the recently established Norman (q.v.) dominions in Sicily. But the Berber rulers never fully mastered this new environment. In 1087, a European coalition captured Mahdiyya, which the Zirids recovered only after paying a ransom. Both Arab nomads and Normans continued to hem in the Zirids, and later amirs sought help from the al-Murabit. But the Christians' unwillingness to countenance a strong Muslim force in Ifriqiya prompted them to strengthen their own hand there, precluding such intervention. By the 1130s, the dynasty had become so debilitated that it was forced to turn to the Normans for protection against its other enemies. The Normans took advantage of this situation to seize the entire coast of Ifriqiya except for Tunis in 1148. The reigning Zirid amir took refuge with his Hammadid kinsmen, and the family's rule came to an end.

Ziyadat Allah I (r. 817–838). Third Aghlabid (q.v.) ruler. Like his predecessors, he faced opposition from the many Arabs in the army who resented the Aghlabid family's accession to power and its subsequent efforts to assert its authority over all the institutions of the state, including the military. In 824, however, Ziyadat Allah I repressed the most serious revolt that had yet arisen. He initiated a series of campaigns against Byzantine Sicily in 827, in part to provide an outlet for the militancy of the Arab tribes, but also to win the support of Ifriqiya's religious leadership by establishing his credentials as a ruler committed to Islamic values and the expansion of the faith. By the time of his death, much of the island had been brought under Aghlabid control. The income derived from Sicily helped assuage the Arab soldiery, as did an amnesty to the leaders of the rebellion, which Ziyadat Allah I granted in 829. He bequeathed prosperity and stability to his successors, enabling them to consolidate their power and to indulge in building projects, both in Ifriqiya proper and in Sicily, that subsequently characterized the dynasty.

Ziyadat Allah III (r. 903–909). Last Aghlabid (q.v.) ruler. His accession, secured by murdering rival claimants, reinforced the image of Aghlabid immorality and unscrupulousness that Abu Abdallah (q.v.) had already begun to stress among the Berber tribes and thus to undermine the dynasty. A steady stream of defeats at the hands of Abu Abdallah marked his reign. After the last and most devastating of these setbacks, the Battle of al-Urbus (q.v.) in 909, Ziyadat Allah III fled to Egypt and the dynasty collapsed.

Selected Twentieth-Century Bibliography: Introduction

For many years, research and writing on Tunisian topics were largely the preserve of French scholars. Although other historians and social scientists, including many from the English-speaking world, have taken a considerable interest in the country since its independence in 1956, it nevertheless remains true, forty years later, that the majority of material published on Tunisia continues to appear in French. French researchers still produce many of these studies but more and more frequently they are the products of Tunisian scholars. Another significant trend in the study of Tunisia is the growing volume of material written in Arabic by Tunisians and others. This bibliography does not include Arabic titles, but its extensive citation of French and English books and articles, along with a smattering of publications in such other European languages as Spanish, Italian, German, and Dutch, does accurately reflect the nature of twentieth-century scholarship on Tunisia.

Several genres of writing have been excluded from this bibliography. Despite their relative abundance, travelers' accounts have been omitted, except for occasional examples that provide significant insights to the society or are among a limited number of sources available on a specific time period or a specific event. For the most part, these items tell more about the observer than about the observed. Such information can be extremely useful, but it does not directly enhance (and may well impede) the reader's understanding of Tunisian history or society. Tourist guides, of which there are many, a number of them in English, have also been excluded. In keeping with the dictionary's historical emphasis, modern novels, poetry, short stories, literary anthologies, and essays on literary criticism have not generally been listed. This should not, however, be construed as suggestive of a Tunisian deficiency in belles lettres. On the contrary, Tunisian authors publish prolifically. Many are widely read and critically acclaimed in European and Arab circles. Dictionary entries on several prominent literary figures of the modern era include references to their best-known works.

The bibliography begins with a list of general works on Tunisia that encompasses surveys of the country and items dealing with primary source materials. A section enumerating books and articles on geographical topics follows. The remainder of the bibliography is presented

chronologically. The first portion, on pre-Islamic Tunisia, lists only a representative sampling of general books and articles on the Carthaginian, Roman, Vandal, and Byzantine eras. Subsequent segments bring together articles and books on the history, politics, economy, and culture of periods identified as "Early Arab Rule" (670–973); "The Berber Dynasties" (973–1574); "The Ottomans and the Deys" (1574–1705); "The Husainid Era" (until 1881); and "The Protectorate Era" (1881–1956). Overlapping the time frame of the last section is a topical category devoted to "Nationalism" and recording material on the country's nationalist movement from the late nineteenth century until independence.

For the years since 1956, entries are also divided thematically. Books and articles on domestic and international politics make up one section; economic matters are the subject of a second; and a third focuses on sociocultural issues broadly defined.

Finally, four periodicals that are especially helpful in keeping abreast of contemporary developments in, as well as contemporary scholarship on, Tunisia deserve mention. *Jeune Afrique* is a weekly newsmagazine published in Paris. Its scope extends well beyond Tunisia with an emphasis on the African and Arab worlds, but *Jeune Afrique* closely follows Tunisian events. The *Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord* is an annual survey of all the Maghrib countries published under the auspices of the Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris. In addition to scholarly articles, often constructed around a single theme, the *Annuaire* contains an extensive chronology and a detailed bibliography of new publications in European languages and in Arabic that lists books, articles from scholarly journals, relevant items from the popular press, government publications, and dissertations. Owing to the magnitude of this undertaking, each *Annuaire* comes out only several years after the year which it covers, but it is an indispensable reference work for any serious examination of modern Tunisia.

A second chronology and bibliography, although only of recently published works in French, appears quarterly in *Monde Arabe*. *Maghreb-Machrek* is a journal published under the auspices of the French government's Direction de la Documentation Française. Unquestionably the most detailed bibliography devoted specifically to Tunisia is the one compiled by the *Revue de l'Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes (IBLA)*. Each issue of this Tunisian scholarly journal contains a list of new books (frequently with synopses) and articles on the country in all languages and in virtually every field of the humanities and social sciences, making it an excellent starting point for research on the country.

Reference Works and General Studies

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